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Security Council

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Letter dated 1 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (see annex).

I should be most grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Matthew **Rycroft**

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Annex to the letter dated 1 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces, it is with great alarm that I draw your attention to escalating Russian military aggression in Syria and its lethal impact on civilians.

On Wednesday, Russian air forces indiscriminately attacked opposition-held areas in Homs Province, leaving behind a path of destruction and death in their wake. Under the false pretence of engaging in counter-terrorism operations, Russian forces indiscriminately bombed civilian areas, killing innocent men, women and children. Rescue workers from the Syrian civil defence teams on the ground reported that Russian warplanes had indiscriminately bombed civilians, resulting in 34 civilian deaths, 10 of which were children and 7 of which were women, as well as injuries to 146 civilians, including 45 children.

These indiscriminate aerial attacks are part of an overt and calculated attempt by Russian forces to aid and abet the Syrian regime's war on civilians. They are designed not to counter terrorist extremist groups like ISIS, but to support the Assad regime's indiscriminate slaughter of civilians. By involving itself so directly in the killing of innocent Syrians, Russia makes itself a direct party to the Syrian conflict and risks implicating itself in war crimes. Russia's actions violate not only the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, but also Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), which demands that all parties to the conflict distinguish between civilian populations and combatants and refrain from indiscriminate attacks and attacks on civilians.

Russia's actions will have consequences — not merely for Russians inside Syria, but for the fight against ISIS. The Russian forces' indiscriminate slaughter of civilians will fuel extremism and exacerbate the refugee crisis. Like Assad's barrel bombs, Russia's unwanted invasion will serve as a recruiting tool for ISIS and will make Syria — and the world — less safe.

On behalf of the people of Syria, I appeal to the States members of the Security Council to work with urgency to condemn in the strongest terms Russia's illegal military aggression in Syria and pursue all means necessary to stop the indiscriminate aerial bombardment in Syria, including through the enforcement of a ban on aerial bombardment: a no-bombing zone. If Russia — as party to the conflict — will not allow the Council to act, Member States must themselves ensure the protection of civilians.

(*Signed*) Khaled **Khoja**
President
National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces